

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-26 (Canceled)

27. (New) A retractable thruster for a vessel having a hull, the thruster comprising:

a propulsion assembly having a propeller and a rigid structure secured to a cylindrical turbine;

a plate for closing the hull, said plate being disposed beneath said turbine and secured thereto; and

displacement means to move said propulsion assembly between a retracted position in which it is at rest inside the hull and a deployed position in which the propeller is immersed beneath the hull;

wherein said displacement means enable uniform circular movement of said propulsion assembly between said retracted and deployed positions about an axis of rotation that is not physically embodied in the hull and situated substantially no higher than the level of said hull;

wherein said displacement means include first and second guide elements suitable for co-operating with said propulsion assembly to enable said propulsion assembly to be moved between said retracted and deployed positions by said propulsion assembly about said axis of

rotation situated substantially no higher than said hull, said uniform circular movement being determined by the shape of said guide elements;

wherein said first guide element is secured to said propulsion assembly for describing the same uniform circular movement as said propulsion assembly and suitable for co-operating with said second guide element;

wherein said second guide element is stationary and secured to said hull; and

wherein said uniform circular movement is defined by the shape of said first and second guide elements, said first and second guide elements co-operating by displacement of said first guide element relative to said second guide element to enable said propulsion assembly to be moved between said retracted and deployed positions.

28. (New) A retractable thruster for a vessel having a hull, the thruster comprising:

a propulsion assembly having a propeller and a rigid structure secured to a cylindrical turbine;

a plate for closing the hull, said plate being disposed beneath said turbine and secured thereto; and

displacement means to move said propulsion assembly between a retracted position in which it is at rest inside the hull and a deployed position in which the propeller is immersed beneath the hull;

wherein said displacement means enable uniform circular movement of said propulsion assembly between said retracted and deployed positions about an axis of rotation that

is not physically embodied in the hull and situated substantially no higher than the level of said hull.

29. (New) A thruster according to claim 28, wherein said displacement means comprise guide elements suitable for co-operating with said propulsion assembly to enable said propulsion assembly to be moved between said retracted and deployed positions by said propulsion assembly about said axis of rotation, said uniform circular movement being determined by the shape of said guide elements.

30. (New) A thruster according to claim 29, wherein said guide elements comprise at least first and second guide elements, said first guide element being secured to said propulsion assembly for describing the same uniform circular movement as said propulsion assembly and suitable for co-operating with said second guide element, said second guide element being stationary and secured to said hull, said uniform circular movement being defined by the shape of said guide elements, said first and second guide elements co-operating by displacement of said first guide element relative to said second guide element in order to enable said propulsion assembly to be moved between said retracted and deployed positions.

31. (New) A thruster according to claim 30, wherein said moving first guide element includes a male part forming a slider and being secured to said propulsion assembly, and said second guide element comprises a mating female part forming a slideway, said slideway forming a circular arc enabling said first guide element to describe said circular movement by sliding inside said second guide element.

32. (New) A thruster according to claim 30, wherein said first guide element secured to said propulsion assembly includes a female part defining a slideway and said second guide element includes a male part defining a slider, said slideway forming a circular arc enabling said second guide element to describe said circular movement by sliding inside said first guide element.

33. (New) A thruster according to claim 30, wherein said first guide element includes at least first, second and third male parts, symmetrically disposed on either side of said propulsion assembly so as to co-operate respectively with at least first and second female parts defining respective first and second concentric circular slideways that are geometrically similar and disposed symmetrically on either side of said propulsion assembly, said first slideway having a radius greater than that of said second slideway, at least said first and second male parts being suitable for sliding inside said first slideway and at least said third male part, being suitable for sliding inside at least said second slideway.

34. (New) A thruster according to claim 33, wherein said first, second and third male parts are three sliders disposed in a triangle.

35. (New) A thruster according to claim 30, wherein said first guide element includes at least first, second and third male parts, symmetrically disposed on either side of said propulsion assembly so as to co-operate respectively with at least first and second female parts defining respective first and second concentric circular slideways that are geometrically similar

and disposed symmetrically on either side of said propulsion assembly, said first slideway having a radius greater than that of said second slideway at least said first and second male parts, being suitable for sliding inside said first slideway and at least said third male part being suitable for sliding inside said second slideway, wherein one of said first and second guide elements is turned relative to the other of said first or second elements in said circular movement by a motor cooperating with said one of said first and second guide elements via link elements so as to enable said propulsion assembly to be blocked in the retracted position or in the deployed position, where appropriate.

36. (New) A thruster according to claim 35, wherein said first, second and third male parts are sliders disposed in a triangle.

37. (New) A thruster according to claim 29, wherein said guide elements comprise a plurality of guide elements, disposed laterally on either side of said propulsion assembly on either side of a vertical plane containing the longitudinal axis of said rigid structure.

38. (New) A thruster according to claim 28, wherein at least a first portion of said propulsion assembly is disposed inside a caisson and is secured thereto, said caisson being fitted on the top edge of a well, and said well being fitted inside said hull and having its base surrounding said opening in said hull.

39. (New) A thruster according to claim 38,
wherein said rigid structure has a longitudinal axis,

wherein said propulsion assembly is inclined in such a manner that a plane containing said longitudinal axis of said rigid structure is inclined in the retracted position relative to one of the longitudinal direction of the vessel and to the junction plane between said caisson and said well at an angle α of value lying in the range 10° to 60° , and is inclined in the deployed position relative to one of the same longitudinal direction of the vessel and the junction plane between said caisson and said well at an angle β of value lying in the range 45° to 100° .

40. (New) A thruster according to claim 39,

wherein angle α has a value lying in the range 10° to 30° , and angle β has a value lying in the range 60° to 90° .

41. (New) A thruster according to claim 38, further comprising guide elements associated with at least one second plate mounted in a stationary manner on at least one side wall of said caisson.

42. (New) A thruster according to claim 41, wherein said at least one second plate includes at least two second plates, and wherein at least two of said second plates are mounted on opposite side walls of said caisson.

43. (New) A thruster according to claim 38 wherein said displacement means includes guide elements disposed within at least one plate mounted in a stationary manner on at least one side wall of said caisson.

44. (New) A thruster according to claim 43, wherein said guide elements comprise a plurality of said first and second guide elements, disposed laterally on either side of said propulsion assembly on either side of a vertical plane containing the longitudinal axis of said rigid structure.

45. (New) A thruster according to claim 28, further comprising drive means for driving said propulsion assembly in a circular manner relative to the hull.

46. (New) A thruster according to claim 28, wherein said rigid structure comprises a structure in the form of a rectangular parallelepiped providing a leaktight connection firstly with a cover, and secondly with said turbine, and further comprising at least two guide elements mounted against opposite side faces of said structure.